**Divorce, Marital Conflict, and Well-being: Should parents stay in a troubled marriage or go?**

Learning Objectives for this Divorce topic assignment:

1. Access the research literature and synthesize the findings from multiple articles to describe the current state of knowledge about the impact of divorce on children

2. Compare the current state of research knowledge with the student's personal views.

3. Demonstrate knowledge from the research literature that the causes of behavioral problems in children result less from divorce and more from the relationships with in the family unit whether the family lives together or apart.

**The Assignment**

Your primary response to the topic will earn up to 25 points plus additional points for your comments and replies to each of two substantive responses to two other students' postings for a total of 35 points for the week. Remember, a substantive response is required to earn points. This means that merely agreeing or disagreeing, or saying "nice work" earns no points. You must address the issues and concepts in the assignment as they pertain to the student's message in order to earn points. You may reply to as many students as you wish, and you must also reply to students who reply to you if their message necessitates a response from you. If you "post & run" and never look back, you will be penalized 1 point for not responding to a student who said something to you that needed to be responded to.

**The topic for this week:** What's best for parents and children when a marriage has been deeply troubled for a long time? How does one decide when to keep on trying and when to give up and separate? What is the current state of knowledge based upon our best research evidence?

Before reading another line of this message, **ponder your view** of the impact of divorce upon children and the marital partners. Here is a series of questions to consider:

* Under what conditions should the parents stay together in a troubled marriage if only to provide a better growth experience for the children, and when would the children be better off if the parents divorce.
* Are children of intact two-parent families more likely to have higher degrees of psychological well-being and fewer psychological problems than children whose parents divorced? Or does it depend mostly upon the conditions and relationships within the two parent family whether the children are better off with the parents together or apart? If having parents apart is the crucial detrimental factor, what happens to those families who are separated by job duties requiring one parent to be away from home a lot - such as business executives, professional athletes, or even psychologists on the lecture and convention circuit? Is it parental separation, parental absence, or the atmosphere in the home that is the primary source of strengths and problems in children?
* How do you come to hold your opinions about this? Are you open to change in your opinions if scientific evidence does not support your views?
* Sobolewski, J.M. & Amato, P.R. (2007). Parents' discord and divorce, parent-child relationships and subjective well-being in early adulthood: is feeling close to two parents always better than feeling close to one? *Social Forces,* *85*(3), 1105-1124.
* Kelly, J. B. (2007). Children's living arrangements following separation and divorce: insights from empirical and clinical research. *Family Process*, *46*(1), 35-52.
* Ahrons, C. R. (2007). Family ties after divorce: long-term implications for children. *Family Process,* *46*(1), 53-65.
* Bernstein, A. C. (2007). Re-visioning, restructuring, and reconciliation: clinical practice with complex postdivorce families. *Family Process,* *46*(1), 67-78.
* Amato, P.R. & Cheadle, J. (2005). The long reach of divorce: divorce custody and child well-being across three generations. Journal of Marriage and Family, 67, (1), 191-206.
* Nair, H. & Murray, A. D. (2005). Predictors of attachment security in preschool children from intact and divorced families. *The Journal of Genetic Psychology, 166*, (3), 245-263,
* Strohschein, L. (2005). Parental divorce and child mental health trajectories. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 67*, (5), 1286-1300.
* Wallerstein, J.S. (2005). Growing up in the divorced family. *Clinical Social Work Journal, 33*, (4), 401-417.
* Hawkins, D.H., & Booth, A. (2005). Unhappily ever after: effects of long-term, low-quality marriages on well-being . *Social Forces, 84,* (1), 451-471.
* Greeff, A.P., & Van Der Merwe, S. (2004). Variables associated with resilience in divorced families. *Social Indicators Research, 68*, (1), 59-75.
* Leon, K. (2003). Risk and protective factors in young children's adjustment to parental divorce: A review of the research. *Family Relations, 52*(3), 258.
* Kelly, J.B., & Emery, R.E. (2003). Children's adjustment following divorce: Risk and resilience perspectives. *Family Relations, 52*(4), 352-362.
* Yongmin Sun , & Yuanzhang Li . (May 2002). Children's well-being during parents' marital disruption process: A pooled time-series analysis. *Journal of Marriage and Family 64* (2), 472-488.
* Rodgers, K.B., & Rose, H.A., (2002). Risk and resiliency factors among adolescents who experience marital transitions. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 64,* (4), 1024-1037.
* Sun, Y. (2001). Family environment and adolescents' well-being before and after parents' marital disruption: A longitudinal analysis. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 63,* (3), 697-713.
* Simmons, R.L., Lin, K., Gordon, L.C., Conger, R.D., Lorenz, F.O. (1999). Explaining the higher incidence of adjustment problems among children of divorce compared with those in two-parent families". *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 61*, (4), 1020-1034.

In your response to this topic, **address the following in at least 500 words,** although more is welcome. You will lose points for less than 500 words. Cite your sources in APA format from at least three of the above articles to support your views. Be very careful not to plagiarize other students' work that was posted before your own. Any suggestion that you have not done your own research and writing will lead to a 0 score and the burden of proof will be on you to demonstrate that you have read the article that you claim to have read.

1. Describe your views of the impact of divorce upon children before doing this assignment according to your answer to the opening questions. (1 point)
2. Summarize at least four significant issues or findings in the three articles you read. (15 points) Be sure to address the following two questions:
3. \*\*Are specific factors at work that predict increased problems for children of divorce?
4. \*\*Is it the actual divorce that causes the main problems for children or the family dynamics that have existed long before the divorce?
5. Cite the articles that you are using in your response in APA format (authors and year) so that we can assess the accuracy of your use of the research evidence. Citations follow the information you are using that was in the article.
6. How does the research evidence in these articles compare with your views of the impact of divorce and custody on children before you began this assignment? How would you describe the impact of divorce on children now? Is it a huge disaster with life-long debilitating effects, or a transient stressor that most recover from with little long-term impact, or is some other type of event. (3 points)
7. Based on the research evidence, is it better for parents to stay together for the sake of the kids even when their marital relationship is painful and no hope is seen for improvement? Remember that the effects of divorce on children must be compared to the effects of keeping a severely distressed or dysfunctional family living together. (3 points)
8. Compose an APA formatted reference for each of the three articles you read and cited in your response (3 points)
9. **Submit your response in the Drop Box with this topic in its name. Then post your comments about the issues in this assignment in the Discussion Forum** (6 points). **Respond to at least two students’ messages in a substantive manner** for 2 points each)

The total points for this assignment is 29 (25 for your primary response and 4 points for responses to other students). You must include an APA formatted reference list at the end of your response so I can see the articles you are claiming to have read and cited in your response. You must cite each article in your reference list.

**How do we find "the facts?"** In the developing science of psychology we call this question "What is the current state of knowledge about the effects of parental separation and divorce upon the children and parents?" We will not be able to read all there is to know obviously, but we can get a sample of it here.

**Choose three of the following several articles to read and include elements in your response.** Certainly you may read more than three articles if you wish and include any other sources of interest to you, but this is not required to earn a high score. The titles reflect the subject matter. Read the abstracts of some of them in ProQuest and then pick the three of most interest to you. Remember that you do not need to understand all the professional research jargon and statistics to get the basic information about the problems studied and the conclusions of the researchers, just as we did in the Exploring Psychology topic.

I suggest that you read the first section (one or two pages usually) about the topic that is being researched and what is known about it. Then skip to the last section, usually titled "Discussion" or "Conclusions" (or a similar wording), where the authors describe that was learned from this particular piece of research. This last section is usally one or two pages long and understandable generally by most of us. Again, you do not need to read the entire article and understand all the professional research wording and statistics to get the general iea of what was researched and what was learned from it.

Each of these articles is available in ProQuest. Do a publication search and select volume, and issue. Then find the article by title. You may also do a key word search using the first few words of the article title in parentheses. Provide and APA formatted reference for each of your three articles at the end of your response.

The following list is in order of publication with the most recent first. Date of publication is not an indicator of which articles are best; select the three that seem most interesting to you. Reading the abstract of each in ProQuest may help you decide.